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SUBJECT: Human Rights Day Message Reaches Millions of Argentines

Ref: Buenos Aires 837

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¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Embassy Buenos Aires used the observance of Human Rights Day on December 10 to reach tens of thousands of Argentines on the importance of respecting human rights both here in Argentina and throughout the world. Post co-hosted a human rights recognition ceremony with the GOA's National Anti-Discrimination Institute (INADI), sponsored GWU professor Allida Black to discuss the formation of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the human rights challenges facing the incoming Obama administration, and placed an op-ed in daily-of-record La Nacion. Post's efforts to mark the 60th anniversary of the declaration and hail the 25th anniversary of the return to democracy in Argentina have helped to underscore our commitment to the defense of human rights to an audience that has long been skeptical of our intentions. Coincidentally, this December 10 marked the 25th anniversary of uninterrupted democracy in Argentina. END SUMMARY.

Joint Human Rights Event with the Government

¶2. (U) In May, the Ambassador met with Maria Jose Lubertino, the President of GOA's National Anti-Discrimination Institute (INADI), an Argentine government agency we have been very interested in supporting. Lubertino and the Ambassador discussed the possibility of co-sponsoring a joint event to honor ex-First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's role in drafting and ratifying the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (reftel). Since then, Post has worked with INADI to organize the event, sponsoring the visit of Professor Allida Black, Project Director and Editor of George Washington University's "Eleanor Roosevelt Papers," a project designed to preserve, teach and apply Eleanor Roosevelt's writings and discussions of human rights and democracy.

¶3. (U) On December 9, Post co-hosted an award event with INADI at the Ambassador's residence. The event commemorated the 60th anniversary of the UN's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and highlighted -- through keynote remarks by Dr. Black -- former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's role in the drafting and ratification of the Declaration.

¶4. (U) During the event, INADI President Lubertino and the Ambassador presented certificates of recognition to one NGO and four women activists for their contribution to the defense and protection of human rights. Awards were given to the men and women of the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF) for their investigation of human rights violations in Argentina and more than 30 conflict-torn countries throughout the world. Their efforts (supported by over \$1.4 million in ESF Democracy and Human Rights funds) to identify the remains of human rights victims have helped many countries, including Argentina, with their reconciliation processes by providing closure to the victims' families. The award was also given to Margarita Barrientos, director of a soup kitchen

in the poor neighborhood of Los Piletones, who in addition to feeding 1,600 children and adults a day in Villa Soldati, fights to help them gain access to education and health care. Indigenous leader Rosario Quispe was also recognized for her efforts to develop a sustainable microcredit system for fifty indigenous communities that has created thousands of jobs for women. Other honorees included Dr. Ana Belen Elgoyhen for her groundbreaking research on hearing disorders that may one day improve the quality of life for the hearing-impaired, and to disability rights activist Marilu Ferreira.

Speaker Programming

15. (U) Following the INADI event, Dr. Black spoke at the Argentine Council on International Relations (CARI), a prestigious Argentine foreign policy think-tank, on the "Challenges in Human Rights for the Obama Administration." Also, Professor Black gave a talk in La Plata, capital of Buenos Aires province, on "Eleanor Roosevelt and the Battle to Create the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." She was also featured in a DVC with Quito, Ecuador, and Cordoba, Argentina, on the same topic.

Media Outreach

16. (U) In addition to these presentations, on December 10, Post placed the Ambassador's op-ed on human rights in the prestigious daily "La Nacion," reaching over 150,000 Argentines. The Post-drafted op-ed, "From Roosevelt to Obama," focused on the development of civil and human rights in the United States and informed the Argentine public of the USD 1.4 million grant the USG provided the EAAF to conduct a national campaign in Argentina to obtain blood samples of relatives of those disappeared during the military dictatorship in an effort to identify remains.

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17. (U) Media coverage of Embassy Human Rights Day events was substantial, reaching almost every media organization in the country. These included Telam, a state-owned wire service agency, ImpulsoBaires.com, Noticias.MDQ, the Mar del Plata online newspaper, Portal La Plata, Yahoo Noticias, La Voz.com, El Argentino.com, Terra.com, and InfoBae.com. Dr. Black was also interviewed by leading newspaper Clarin and the pro-government daily Pagina 12. Clarin plans to run a two-page article on Dr. Black and the human rights issues facing the Obama administration on Inauguration Day, January 20, 2009.

Comment: Addressing a Neuralgic Issue Head-on

18. (SBU) Engaging with Argentines on human rights can be complicated by the wariness with which many of them view the role of U.S. "support" for the military dictatorship from 1976-83, when an estimated 10,000-30,000 armed guerrillas, political dissidents, sympathizers, and others were killed or disappeared. The fact that INADI, an Argentine government agency dedicated to the advancement of civil rights, approached the USG to carry out a joint activity to commemorate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a positive and welcome gesture. Post's efforts to mark the 60th anniversary of the declaration and hail the 25th anniversary of the return to democracy in Argentina have helped to underscore our commitment to the defense of human rights to a historically skeptical audience.

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